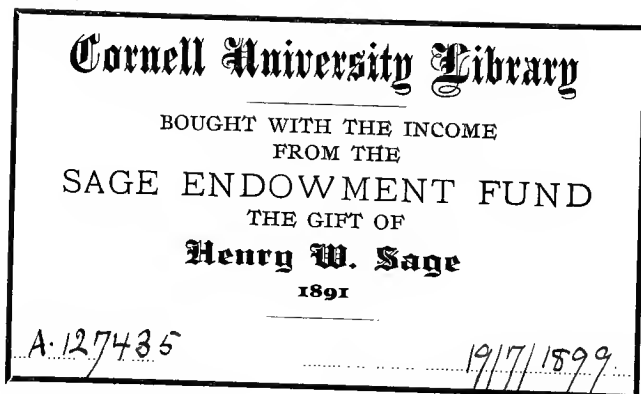


# AN EPIC OF THE SOUL

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AN EPIC  
OF THE SOUL

[Greenough = 1899]

NEW YORK  
THOMAS WHITTAKER

1899

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I

**The Death of Summer**

**T**HE weary summer sickens, soon to die;  
The fields are dusty, and the sheaves of corn  
Draw up their tattered draperies, raise on high  
Their warning, skeleton fingers,—nod and sigh  
In the passing wind, and whisper, all forlorn.

For summer's work is done—her weak hand drops  
Its wealth of orchard rows, of ripened crops,  
Into the lap of autumn, standing by.

## II

### The Reign of Dust

**I** SEEK in vain, for no fresh flowers are here;  
A light wind curls the dust along the street.  
The grass is parched, the leaves are choked and sere;  
Although to-day begins the death of the year  
We gasp beneath the stifling, lifeless heat.

And everything stands panting, white with dust,  
Impatient for the rain—the rushing gust—  
The thunderstorm to clear the atmosphere.



### III

#### A Refuge

**W**HEN thoughts of earthly things too much enslave  
I turn to mighty suns by us unseen,—  
Or many a black, unknown, invisible cave  
Of our own globe,—or to the pulsing wave  
Of strange, dark blood behind this fleshy screen.

Such little homes of one great God are we,  
And everything we see or do not see,  
Else all would be forgotten as the grave.

## IV

### To an Atheist

**N**AY, do not look on me so scornfully,  
My friend; beneath is ignorance and anguish.  
You skim the surface of philosophy  
And chatter your opinions flippantly—  
And all divine and saving passions languish.

Yet terror yawns at times, and blank despair,  
For the relief of reverence is not there,—  
And yet you do not know your own deficiency.

## V

### One Who sees Truth and Falsehood

**H**OW futile is this life, unless there be  
Some broad Intelligence, to reconcile  
My views of others and their views of me  
And mine of me, with that real self which He  
Beholds—a crystal sparkling in his smile.

In Him we ravel out this tangled skein,  
In Him all crooked ways shall be made plain,  
All shall be clear as far as eye can see.

## VI

### A Desire

**W**OULD that I were a ship, which in the vast  
Of waters, yet hath found safe anchorage,—  
A column, careless of the whistling blast—  
A pyramid, not to be overcast—  
An oak, whose roots strike deeper, age to age ;  
  
A rock, firm-set upon a stormy coast—  
A tower of strength against a maddened host—  
A self-forgetful, bold enthusiast.

## VII

### Nature's Sympathy

**H**OW nature sympathizes with our moods,  
How well interprets them! She soothes away  
In the great sorrow over which she broods  
My selfish discontent, for she includes  
My little sadness in her own to-day.

She mourns in each dejected, dripping leaf,  
Each dash of rain,—her uncomplaining grief  
Enwraps whole tracts of pathless solitudes.

## VIII

### Hope in Despondency

**A**S rays the sunlight from the misty west  
After a storm, and sweeter is the calm,—  
So, though there seems a weight upon my breast,  
And though my heart is sick and sore-opprest  
I know that it will find a kindly balm.

So I embrace my transient suffering  
And cherish it, and take away its sting,  
Till o'er my spirit steals a tide of rest.

## IX

### The Land Beulah

**I** RECOLLECT one perfect day—words fail  
To tell the peace thereof, how fond soever.  
I seemed upon a spacious intervale  
'Mid grouping elms, deep grass and galingale,  
In time so sweet that it should last forever.

Such days are far apart as hill from hill,—  
Their distant prospects, their pure visions thrill  
One's heart, when passing down a shadowed dale.

## X

### A Glimpse

**A**T times I see, as in a waking dream,  
Great nature laboring blindly toward no end:  
I see her marvelous creations teem  
With useless life—and even the beauty extreme  
Of man's brute body, whither does it tend?

A sudden splendor flashes from on high,  
I see him bare his bosom to the sky—  
His frame transfigured in that piercing beam.



## XI

### Immortality

**I** KNOW that it is so, in heart and soul—  
As God doth live forever, we shall live.  
Though ice should lock the globe from pole to pole  
Or though the universe be turned to coal,  
'T were but the end of what was fugitive.

So when the world has fruited, and is nought,  
We still shall be an island in God's thought  
To care for, to illumine, to console.

## XII

### A Cruel Deity

**D**OES God look down upon us from a star  
Careless of love or hate, of good or ill?  
And will He send no shining avatar  
While man's great spirit beats its prison-bar  
Longing to worship, and to know His will?

If He be but a great, impartial eye  
Expressionless, then let us creep and die,  
For we ourselves are more humane by far.

## XIII

### Is He Revealed?

**Y**ET how can we submit to those inflictions  
At which the powers of reason grow satirical,  
Or pin our faith to any pleasing fictions,  
Though honest seeming, full of contradictions,  
Supported by the jugglery of miracle?

The story seems a beautiful invention—  
The birth, the resurrection, the ascension—  
And can it move the mind with deep convictions?

## XIV

### A Prayer for Pardon

**F**ORGIVE me, oh my God, if I resist  
Thy holy Spirit; let me never harden  
My human heart's warm promptings, but enlist  
Its service for the truth—not warp and twist,  
Deforming knowledge,—pardon me, oh pardon!

Let faith bring virtue, virtue understanding,  
Whence love is born, and love alway expanding  
Rise to the joy of thine evangelist.

## XV

### The Master

**O**NE way God opens by the which we rise;  
Through him who was the perfect illustration  
Of all that saves, transfigures, dignifies  
Man's life—the Master speaking to the wise,  
The Prophet, fired by holy indignation,—

Among the sons of men, still doing good,  
And round him, felt, but slowly understood,  
A gentle radiance, seen by angels' eyes.

## XVI

### October

**I**T is the pleasant summer of all saints,  
And autumn, in his ripe old age serene,  
(While now the mellow sunlight richly paints  
The maples,) free from discords, cares, complaints,  
Feels close at hand the world that is unseen.

Oh, happy those who labored long ago  
And after labor rest—what peace they know  
In silent spaces, far from toils and taints!

## XVII

### Aftersummer

**M**ORE beautiful than summer in her pride,  
Sweet spirit of repose, I cling to thee!  
Must thou depart? Then let thy peace abide  
With me the winter through; nay, do not hide  
The sorrow in thine eyes—it grieveth me.

Yet that thou could'st, upon this rustic seat,  
Against this sunny wall, stay with me, sweet!  
But no, a cool breeze whirls a withered leaf aside.

## XVIII

### Contemplation

**A**H, would that it were granted me to lead  
A sheltered life—that I might overlook  
From some high oriel, a sunny mead  
Toward mountains in the south, and day long feed  
Upon the ripple of the distant brook.

To feel the quiet of the afterglow  
And tune the frame in harmony—to grow  
Into the heart of things—were life indeed !



## XIX

### Activity

**I** WOULD not be forever self-controlled,  
But with clear eyes that sometimes flame in wrath,  
Not dimmed by too much study,—and high-souled,  
Large-limbed, pure-blooded as a god of old,—  
Strong as an athlete coming from the bath ;

And with a body fresh and unabused,  
By some great thought uplifted and transfused,  
Not bent and soiled with grovelling in the mould.

## XX

### Dualism

**A**H me! I cannot do the thing I would:  
Some strange perversity, I know not what,  
(As if before my face a phantom stood)  
Bewilders me, and blurs the pure and good—  
I catch a glimpse of something I knew not.

Oh make me one as Thou art, gracious Lord!  
For often I am like a twanging chord  
Seen double, and not sounding as it should.

## XXI

### Prayer

**S**HALL I not pray? With curling lip you say:  
“What profits it?” Oh worshipper of the letter,  
You fall upon your knees before the gray  
Old despotism of law—Him I obey  
Whose thoughts those laws are. Tell me, which is better?

As man works wonders in the realm of sense  
Shall not our God, in his kind providence,  
Pour his free spirit on us when we pray?

## XXII

### Nature's Sternness

**I**N nature everything must yield to power,  
Brute force in one direction—she endows  
No life with freedom, but the strong devour  
The feeble and the ailing in that hour  
When they forsake the line that she allows.

Yet thus she holds to her ideal types—  
And we must scourge ourselves with many stripes,  
Cast off, put on, to win the offered dower.

## XXIII

### The Street

**S**O mournful are the crowded city streets  
They almost shake my faith—the herd that races  
To gorge its sensual greed, that fawns and cheats,  
And all the loathsome faces that one meets—  
The sordid, bloated, leering, sneering faces.

May I not scorn these scramblers after pelf,  
I, who at times do so despise myself?  
'Tis fair—it does but cancel my receipts.

## XXIV

### Friendship

**B**UT some one clasps me, with a playful sigh;  
And softening beneath the dear compulsion  
In consciousness of faithful love,—though shy,  
Told by an eloquent lip, a trustful eye,  
I feel the surges of a glad revulsion.

Oh happy traitor to thyself, my friend!  
I triumph in thy love, and comprehend  
How we can lose ourselves, and never die.

## XXV

### Girasol

**B**ELOVED! (I but name thee as thou art)  
Why did I then look up? My eyes met thine;  
And 't is a pleasure when we stand apart  
To fix my gaze on thee, and see thee start;  
Yet fears arise which I cannot define—

For all day long my being is subdued  
To one melodious strain, and in that mood  
I fall asleep, with music at my heart.

## XXVI

### Ready for Winter

I STROLLED to-day along a country road.  
Through scrawny apple-trees—an orchard-lane—  
I saw a farmer's house, a warm abode  
Low-roofed and thrifty,—and near by a load  
Of wood piled neatly, sheltered from the rain;

And overhead the scudding clouds were black;  
The hay was heaped in one enormous stack—  
And desolate the fields where it was mowed.



## XXVII

### Before Daybreak

**I**N yon dark cottage wakes another day,  
For from the window gleams a light across  
The vacant yards, and silent pastures, gray  
With rime, and places deadlier cold than they—  
Where the thin willows fringe the ice-filmed foss.

Beyond, a valley dim in vapory chill,—  
And patient trees that sentinel the hill  
Against the dawn, just glimmering far away.

## XXVIII

### First Snow

**T**HE frost has traced its fairy-like designs  
Upon my window—fragile ferns in masses.  
A fall of snow has come by night, and shines  
Upon the floor of ice beneath the pines,  
And makes soft cushions of the tufted grasses.

Around, up hill and down and out of sight,  
The forest stretches, pale in spectral light,  
And in its depths a mystery enshrines.

## XXIX

### Eternal Life

**W**HAT shall the end be? Must each one succumb  
Contentedly, and find his whole employment  
In serving one world-state? In masterdom  
Of art or science? In the wearisome  
Pursuit and grasp of dull, mundane enjoyment?

In other, grander lives my own shall lurk—  
But that is not enough; so let me work  
To find the being that I shall become.

## XXX

### The Universal Will

**I**N my most thorough-going self-disgust  
I find my God, and if I set my teeth  
And wrestle with Him, thrust and counter-thrust,  
I touch a Being in Whom I can trust,—  
Who closes me around and underneath.

Slowly I struggle up to liberty  
By making His will mine—and finally  
I know He loves, because He is so just.

## XXXI

### Aspiration

**W**HENCE comes this reaching upward, this desire,  
Of holiness, that draws with godlike force?  
This thirst and hunger, when our hearts aspire  
To purity made perfect as by fire?  
The river cannot rise above its source ;

And so our longings shall not be denied,  
But we shall live to see them gratified  
When borne aloft on wings that never tire.

## XXXII

### The End of Evolution

**I**T struggles on, blindfolded, old and bent,  
The pitiful, pathetic world—it groans,  
And raises to the sky its wild lament,  
And often in its wretched discontent  
It seems to dash itself against the stones.

A strong young man who failed in his high aim  
And then abandoned hope—yet all the same  
Christ is the goal of his development.

### XXXIII

#### In Paradise

**I** TRUST that all good men who lived of old,  
And all who did or do their best, will hear  
In the mid world the truths that were not told  
Them here though eager—never wilful cold—  
And that they shall be painlessly made clear.

Yet warmer grows the light through dewy air  
In still expectancy of morning, where  
Through centuries of calm, their souls unfold.

## XXXIV

### December

**T**O-NIGHT a tempest rages, but within  
The fire-light warms the room, and all in vain  
The north wind pauses in his blustering din  
To catch the flakes in air and make them spin  
More swiftly, hissing at the window-pane.

He howls among the pines, he beats the walls,  
And gladly would he rush through desolate halls  
And make all dark where light and love had been.



## XXXV

### Christmas-day

**T**HE sun is bright, the chimes of Christmas ring—  
The day that brings old friends to greet our eyes.  
But let us first our Christmas carols sing;  
Then from their hiding places will we bring  
The gifts, and watch each other's pleased surprise.

Oh happy winter day! Its gladness cheers,  
Yet with a memory of by-gone years,—  
So chastened, be it long-continuing.

## XXXVI

### Belief

**B**ELIEF is surely not so difficult—  
This joyful season is a miracle,  
As is the long, harmonious result  
Through toiling centuries of a force occult,  
Felt—yet invisible, inaudible.

Yes, I would fain believe, for is the faith  
Of holy ones through ages but a wraith—  
In which to-day such noble souls exult?

## XXXVII

### Experience

**G**IVE me tempestuous days of strife and stress,  
With rapid changes from despair to hope;  
They know the mighty mountain best who press  
From vale to summit, and they know far less  
Who stand forever half-way up the slope.

Thou knowest that stagnant waters cannot flow;  
Should we be men, not being tempted? No;  
In victory is the intensest happiness.

## XXXVIII

### Choice and Guidance

**I**F I must choose, yet save me from the blight  
Of trusting what is pleasant (a forlorn,  
Self-blinded thing), like one who walks by night  
Along a broken bridge, without a light—

A creature whom the devils laugh to scorn.

Oh, draw me up to Thee, Thou Power unseen!  
I tread upon a slippery ledge, between  
Unfathomed gulfs, no landing-place in sight.

## XXXIX

### The Unseen World

**T**HEY talked to me of spiritual things;  
I thought them all afloat, without a helm,  
On Polar seas, and vain their voyagings,—  
I now think that their anxious questionings  
Are driving men to seek a wider realm,

And that what seemed to me a vague remanding  
To mystery, is the way to an expanding  
And sunny province, whence all wisdom springs.

## XL

### The Dawn of Truth

**T**HE march of thought—how slow, how exquisite  
It is! At first, belief in many gods,  
Until the mind, amid its groping, hit  
Their unity, and at a flash was lit  
After the lapse of lengthened periods.

New splendor breaks, and man, in charmed spell,  
Sees how the powers that rule and that rebel  
Find their solution in the Infinite.

## XLI

### The Spirituality of Law

**T**HROUGH everything we see there runs a law  
Which in itself is quite beyond our ken.  
What are those mighty forces that can draw  
The oak-tree toward the sky, and keep in awe  
The force that tries to pluck it back again?

Both work together—neither is annulled,  
And by their master-mind the spheres are lulled  
In ringing harmony, without a flaw.

## XLII

### St. Agnes' Eve

**T**HE spruce-trees on the lawn are draped and crowned  
With many a snowy, glittering festoon.  
The earth is numb with bitter cold, spell-bound  
In wintry quiet, patient, void of sound—  
The winds are still beneath the frozen moon.

I look up wistfully. Above the pane  
Hang roping icicles—a crystal chain  
Moon-silvered, wind-twisted round and round.



## XLIII

### The Fullness of the Stature of Christ

**I**MPOSTOR He, who stands the self-confessed,  
Who dared so oft to say, "I am"? Absurd!  
No lie could last so long. Such interest  
A wandering madman's tale could not invest—  
The echoes of his cry would be unheard.

A self-deceiver? It would be deceit  
To call by such a name a life so sweet  
And rounded, in all else the holiest.

## XLIV

### Utmost Love

**I**F one of these imperfect likenesses  
Should boast itself a God, its blasphemy  
Be lightning-scathed until it perishes,—  
And yet there is no greater love (he says)  
Than out of love to suffer willingly.

My heart accepts the sacred chronicle  
That tells how Christ, from bliss ineffable,  
Came to reveal our Father's purposes.

## XLV

### “Glory to God in the Highest”

**D**OES not His suffering prove the Fatherhood  
Of God, so craved, so doubted, in this age?  
(The world is like a vast and shadowy wood,  
The haunt of all wild things, and to the good  
A place of strange and lonely pilgrimage).

Yet God was glorified in raising us,  
And therefore rang that song melodious  
From heaven which angels sang,—they understood.

## XLVI

### The Way of Deliverance

**T**HE Lord of life is our deliverer  
From sin—he makes us one with righteousness  
In which our life is hid. When those who err  
In thickets of sharp thorn and juniper  
Look up to him for guidance, he will bless.

The sunset glimmers through a deep ravine  
That parts the awful mountains, and between,  
A single star, to cheer the wanderer.

## XLVII

### Winter Reigns Still

**A** LITTLE while the earth must sleep, for so  
The tyrannous winter bids, and thick and fast  
Come from the Norland gusty whirls of snow  
To fold the meadows—but it soon will go,  
It was a sudden storm, perhaps the last.

The silent road goes winding to the town,  
And over it the elms bend meekly down,  
Pleased with the graceful shadows that they throw.

## XLVIII

### March

**I**T is the saddest month of all the year,  
Of weary waiting for the spring to break.  
Under the drenching rain the earth is drear,  
And through the streaming pane all things appear  
Like wavering reflections in a lake.

And if the sunshine flitteth, faint and dim,  
The oak and beech-leaves still will sigh their hymn  
Of mournful retrospection in mine ear.

## XLIX

### Dependence

**I**T seems that we are made less for our own  
Than others' pleasure. What expressions wake  
Beneath our varying thoughts are watched and known  
By every eye that wills save ours alone—  
Hath any beauty? 'T is for others' sake.

We move about this planet, sensitive  
To every motion round us, and we live  
As long as strength is left in us to moan.

## L

### A Solitude of Sin

**T**HE torrent of his curse what force can stem,  
What measure can determine his obliquity  
Who ruins others? Peace may come to them,  
And waves of ocean sigh their requiem,  
The victims whom he slew in his iniquity.

For them and for himself he must account,  
And, till he fill the terrible amount,  
Through hopeless cycles must himself condemn.



**The Folly of Wickedness**

**T**HAT fate shall theirs be that desire hell,  
And all that love to grieve the heart of God?  
Shall they not have their wish? They know it well,  
They chose iniquity, there let them dwell.

With smitten brain, delirious at the prod  
Of self-disgust, they grovel horribly  
In fits of unrepentant agony  
And longing for the past which they can never quell.

## A Waste of Torment

**O**THERS there are puffed up with boastful pride,  
And some with hot, incestuous fire that maddens,  
Yet, in their state, is never satisfied;  
And some by desert winds blown far and wide,  
Whom fierce desire of torture stings and gladdens  
Yet impotently. When their frantic wish  
Is unfulfilled, a frenzy devilish  
Drives them to vain attempts at suicide.

### LIII

#### The Shadow of a Great Dread

**O**H God, my God, have mercy on these men  
Who, as they gather knowledge, grow in sin!  
Have mercy on the world—it is a den  
Of writhing serpents, and the wild amen  
Of thy despairing people swells the din.

The coming blackness makes the senses reel—  
And yet what hateful gratitude we feel  
To see the lurid sunset fade again!

LIV

A Sound of Spring in the Air

**I** LONG for spring to come—no words can tell  
How glad my heart is when I find a fringe  
Of green by melting snow-banks in a dell.  
The blades of grass are rising, cell by cell;  
Aslant the lawn I catch a faint, fresh tinge.

These frequent showers are for the new year's christening,  
And looking very far away, and listening,  
I hear the mellow tolling of a bell.

LV

To the Great Conqueror

**O**H Victor over darkness, death, decay—  
Those livid phantoms baleful-eyed and frowning  
Whose foul corruption deadens with dismay  
The soul of man—his body is their prey,  
They drum in his ears while he is gasping, drowning:

Oh Victor over that portentous will  
That massed itself against thee, conquer still,  
And lead us men to seek the cheerful day.

LVI

**At Eventide**

**W**HEN fades beyond the softly folding door  
The noisy world, and when the closing blind  
Shuts out the light of day forevermore,  
And when the breaker dies upon the shore,  
At evening they may seek, but shall not find.

For I shall stand above the little earth  
With hands outstretched, a soul of greater girth  
And of a stature loftier than before.

## LVII

### Nearer to the Stars

**L**ORD, I would follow thee, I too would flee  
The spirit-vexing world that brings disunion,  
The gibe and grin of those who cannot see  
Or understand—and hasten to the free  
And lonely places fit for rapt communion.

To gain the tranquil strength that God instils  
On starlit slopes of broad Peræan hills—  
Lord, let me follow, let me walk with thee!

## LVIII

### Sunlight Through Rain

**E**VEN as a little one that droops and fears  
The task before him, thinks it hard, and cries  
Because it seems so dark—but when he hears  
How easy is the way, his visage clears  
And he begins to smile, with brimming eyes,—

So I, who struggled with my wretchedness,  
A foolish child, now gratefully confess  
How light the burden is, with happy tears.



## LIX

### Renewing Time

**A** GAIN the goodness of His work has won  
A smile from God—the frosty nights that strove  
With light and warmth, are by that smile undone,  
And mists of sunny green have now begun  
Upon the stirring maples in the grove.

It gladdens heart and eye to stand beneath  
The buds, each bursting from its ruddy sheath,  
And see them hold their little fingers to the sun.

LX

The Marvel of the New Life

**W**HAT strange delight it is when spring returns  
To taste the oak-buds' nutty tea—to look  
Through sprouting woodland thickets! How one yearns  
To wrest the mystic secret from the ferns  
That rear their filmy crosiers by the brook!

Far off I see the dogwood's creamy pink,  
Through beds of withered leaves the violets wink,  
In my own life the blissful fever burns.

LXI

Release

**I** THINK that it should be enough to spend  
The morning long in worship by a brook  
With many a rushy cove and liliated bend,  
Or in the woods,—yet I would not offend  
One trustful soul who cannot read that book.

Yet let me walk upon the lonely beach  
Or on the hills—'t is there that I can reach  
Unvoiced communion with a steadfast friend.

## LXII

### A Farewell

**T**HOUGH thou art far away, I love thee still.  
Upon a many-petalled nenuphar  
A dew-drop glistened—it can do no ill  
To let it glisten—so I love thee still,  
Although thy love is now a setting star.

It should not be—no pondering can tell  
Why it is so—yet I would not compel;  
Thou hast not wronged me, and I love thee still.

## LXIII

### Worshippers of Mind and Sense

**A**T times sweeps over me a high disdain  
Of those who boastfully are destitute  
Of faith save in themselves; their greatest gain  
A life of pleasure (disciplined and sane)—  
I cry against them, I cannot be mute.

Rather than such a blindness, I would run  
In passion even to that guilty one  
Whose clenched fingers cut her palms for pain.

## LXIV

### A River-valley through the Wilderness

**I** SEEK her guidance o'er the stormy downs  
Who offers me a cup unmixed and pure;  
Whose every act a faithful purpose crowns—  
Whose earnest voice no lowering thunder drowns,—  
'T is full of comfort, bidding me endure.

And at her touch I quiver through and through,  
It cools the brain and makes the pulses true;  
It carries healing into crowded towns.

LXV

A Vista in May

I STOOD to-day within a bright arcade  
That on a sudden opened far before me;  
A breezy roof of green too light to shade  
The new growth underneath, on which there played  
A glory, scattered through the young leaves o'er me.

And toward that light I turned—my steps were charmèd,  
A glossy-wingèd bird rose up, alarmèd,  
And glinted like a jewel down the sunny glade.

## LXVI

### A Summer Evening Sky

**F**AIR islands of delight with golden brinks  
Afloat in summer seas, by soft winds fanned;  
Soon fading as the ebbing daylight shrinks  
(Yet for a while the lingering sunset blinks  
Through drowsy forest-trees of fairy-land)—

While the new moon, a silvery galleon,  
Steers in pursuit of the departed sun  
And skims along the trees, then downward sinks.



LXVII

**Isis—Apollo—Christ**

**N**OT prostrate as before Egyptian fanes  
Of echoing silences and vast repose,—  
Nor looking out o'er Attic hills and plains  
While afternoon's last golden sunlight wanes  
Upon divine Ionic porticos,—

But wrapped in solemn joy, with lifted hands,  
Where, flushed with dawn, a great cathedral stands,  
I am borne upon the heavenward-soaring strains.

## LXVIII

### A Safe and Tranquil Harbor

**S**OMEWHERE I have a stronghold of belief  
Still unassailed by anguish or despair;  
As in a house made dark by loss and grief  
In some alcove stands out, in strong relief,  
A statue, ever calm and pure and fair.

Or as a ship (beneath a tropic moon)  
Dreams on the bosom of a still lagoon,  
While the vexed billows roar beyond the reef.

## LXIX

### What heart-weariness means

I AM glad, devoutly glad, that I embraced  
Each object as 't was offered, which I meant  
To satisfy my heart with,—that I chased  
Moth after moth with headlong, feverish haste,—  
That none of them when clutched could bring content.

I am glad that every pastime soon would pall  
And drive me on, for being sick of all  
I found the living waters sweet to taste.

## LXX

### A Retrospect

**W**HEN I look back along my pathway—yes,  
Only a year ago—how long it seems!  
And I, a creature driven by distress,  
Whose strength is wasted by a sorceress,  
Who moans and tosses under haggard dreams.

Even Nature now, who used me as her slave,  
Bewitched me, teased me with the love she gave,  
Is shy—and yet I do not love her less.

LXXI

She Looks at Me with Deeper Eyes

**N**O longer as before does Nature mock  
With lavish, lawless beauty flung abroad  
A soul where thousand voiceless raptures flock—  
But I can stand where mountain-chains unlock  
To make a cradle for the race of God.

No longer now with senses all awirl  
I watch the clear, impetuous plunge and swirl  
Of crystal breakers round a ledge of rock.

## LXXII

### Proximity

**A**FTER a plunge and swim 't is good to lie  
On bedded rockweed—feel the harmonies  
Of wafting wind and burning sun, and dry  
The skin with fragrant bay-leaves, and so try  
To be as purely glad as Nature is.

And when I cannot help it, if I would,  
But that I must cry out “My God, how good!”  
He is at hand, and loves to hear my cry.

## LXXIII

### Ages of Barrenness

**T**HE sleep of systems on their whirling rim  
Empyrean eons through—the lifeless ocean—  
The agony of mountains—monsters grim  
That gorged and batted for an interim,  
And then the entombing glacier's cruel motion,—

For labor with return so long delayed,  
For all His patient waiting, God is paid  
When but one loving spirit turns to Him.

## LXXIV

### Faith in Adversity

**M**AY-weed and rabbit's-foot, so soft and wee,  
Fringe the dry roadside; and upon the stones  
Banked up in winter by the angry sea  
The yellow primrose blossoms, the wild pea,  
And straggling sumach's juicy, crimson cones.

Dear, patient plants, that weave your delicate flowers  
In spite of pitiless stones and scanty showers,  
Oh, may like hope and effort live in me!



**A Promontory**

**A** WEATHER-BEATEN headland, bleak and lone,  
Round which there roars all day the north-east storm;  
Yet there some fishers' cottages are thrown,  
Red-stained, with groundward roofs all lichen-grown,  
Huddled like sheep together, to keep warm.

Walled in with each a sterile little farm :  
And inland, up a winding, sheltered arm  
Of the sea, the skiffs are anchoring, leeward blown.

## LXXVI

### The Copse on the Marsh

**A** LONELY spot, o'ergrown with shrub and tree,  
With whispering oak and poplar and wild-cherry  
(Safe nesting-places where the birds may flee)—  
These ringed about with plants of less degree,  
As golden-rod, swamp-hemlock, huckleberry.

Around, perpetual marshes stretch away;  
Yet there the breezy coppice, night and day,  
Repeats the long susurrus of the sea.

## LXXVII

### Farewell to Summer

**T**HE wild appeal of leaping billows tells  
Of summer's end. From rifled ocean-caves  
The beach is strewn with barnacles and shells;  
To-night the power of the moon dispels  
The flitting clouds, and lights the troubled waves.

Among the rocks is left a peaceful pool,  
Its margin heaped with sea-weeds dark and cool,  
And there all night the moon's unruffled image dwells.

## LXXVIII

### Harmony

**W**HEN in the soul no motions disagree  
There comes a faith that nothing can disturb.  
And even when man no longer loves—when he  
Befouls himself and falls—it still can see  
The sweeping of a stream that is superb.

All else is superstition—Thou, O Christ,  
Art reason,—even through sin are we enticed,  
Nay, forced to closer fellowship with Thee.

## LXXIX

### Passion and Thought

**T**HE world has entered on a grand domain  
Of boundless thought—but that has not sufficed.  
In truth, it still is puny and in pain—  
Now let it grow in passion, till it gain  
The immortal, all-controlling calm of Christ.

It will, for only so can it achieve  
Results that we as yet can scarce conceive:  
It must, unless it would become insane.

LXXX

Valediction

**W**HATEVER paths my steps have been amid  
Were chosen for me, though I know not why,  
But think 't was love compelling all I did.  
And yet (since I have done as I was bid)  
I shall be cursed by those that love a lie.

But some may kiss this page. May they be blest!  
And then remember, dear ones—in the breast  
Of God Himself all poesy is hid.









